

ABC, CBS make it a race for first in Arbitron November sweeps

Prime-time television viewing was up slightly during Arbitron's November 1981 market-by-market audience measurement sweep, but whether the sweep was won by CBS affiliates or ABC affiliates depends upon whose scorecard is read.

A compilation by CBS researchers shows CBS affiliates about two-thirds of one percent ahead of ABC affiliates in total homes delivered per average quarter-hour (but almost 20% ahead of NBC affiliates). A compilation by ABC researchers puts ABC affiliates about 1.7% ahead of CBS affiliates and about 22% ahead of NBC affiliates.

The main difference in methodology between the two compilations appeared to be that CBS included whatever local programming was presented in prime time during the sweep period, while ABC did not, limiting its count to network programming only. This represented no change in procedure for either network, officials said. In the recent past, however, the gap had been large enough between first place and second that different methodologies had not affected the outcome.

NBC researchers also produced a compilation, which put ABC about a third of

one percent ahead of CBS and about 19% ahead of NBC.

Whatever their differences, the compilations agreed that, in total, prime-time viewing last November was up somewhat from November 1980. CBS put the average quarter-hour total for the combined networks at 42,409,000 homes, up 2.1%; ABC put it at 42,231,000, up 0.6%; NBC put it at 42,549,000, up 2.2%.

It was a different story in the Nielsen sweeps, which put the three-network average at 41,508,000, down 1% from November 1980. There was another difference in Nielsen: CBS won more clearly, leading ABC by over 2% and NBC by 21% in the NBC count and by approximately the same margins in CBS's.

There was yet another difference. The Arbitron sweep period (Oct. 28-Nov. 24) included the final game of the World Series, carried by ABC. The Nielsen sweep period (Oct. 29-Nov. 25) did not. The audience for the series game was seen as a big boost for ABC's Arbitron sweep averages (BROADCASTING, Nov. 30, 1981).

By CBS's count, as well as the counts of ABC and NBC, all three networks could find something in the Arbitron reports to

cheer.

Of 139 markets with three or more stations, CBS claimed its affiliates were first in most, 59.5 markets, as against ABC affiliates (first in 55.5) and NBC affiliates in 24. (Fractional points derived from ties: In two-way ties for first place, for example, each network received a half-point and also tied for second; three-way ties were worth three-tenths of a point for each network.)

The first-place wins represented a gain of 12 first-place markets for NBC since November 1980, a gain of eight and a half for ABC and a loss of 19½ for CBS.

CBS's count also showed NBC affiliates increasing their prime-time homes in 141 markets, declining in 26 and unchanged in nine; for ABC it was gains in 115 markets, declines in 48 and no change in 14, while for CBS it was gains in 56 markets, declines in 108 and no change in 13 markets.

Both NBC and ABC affiliates increased their total prime-time homes delivery, NBC's by 6.8% and ABC's by 3.6%, according to the CBS calculations, while CBS's declined by 2.9%.

CBS's analysis also examined affiliate

performance 9 a.m. to midnight. There, using the same fractional point systems for ties, it found CBS affiliates in first place in 60 markets (down from 70.3 a year earlier), second in 48.5 (up from 43.8) and third in 30.5 (up from 23.8), while ABC affiliates were first in 59 markets (up from 46.8), second in 40.5 (down from 51.8) and third in 39.5 (virtually unchanged from 39.3). For NBC the count was first place in 20 markets (down from 20.8), second in 50 (up from 42.3) and third in 69 (down from 74.8).

The chart below was developed by BROADCASTING from CBS researchers' compilations of Arbitron's November 1980 and 1981 reports. Household numbers are in thousands (add 000) per average prime-time quarter-hour (Monday-Saturday, 8-11 p.m., and Sunday, 7-11 p.m.) and include whatever local programming was broadcast by affiliates during prime time. Percent change shows household gain or loss from November 1980. A dash (—) indicates no primary affiliate in market. An asterisk denotes an affiliation change between the November 1980 and 1981 sweeps. The 1981 sweep period was Oct. 28-Nov. 24.

ADI Rank	ADI	CBS %			NBC %			ABC %		
		1980	1981	change	1980	1981	change	1980	1981	change
154	Abilene-Sweetwater, Tex.	18	14	-22.2	26	31	+19.2	17	17	NC
155	Albany, Ga.	—	—	—	47	58	+23.4	—	—	—
50	Albany-Schenectady-Troy, N.Y.	71	87	+22.5	93	67	-28.0	84	90	+7.1
70	Albuquerque, N.M.	51	53	+3.9	42	44	+4.8	72	73	+1.3
164	Alexandria, La.	—	—	—	25	39	+56.0	—	—	—
166	Alexandria, Minn.	—	—	—	37	38	+2.7	—	—	—
210	Alpena, Mich.	7	7	NC	—	—	—	—	—	—
114	Amarillo, Tex.	31	26	-16.1	26	31	+19.2	41	39	-4.9
—	Anchorage	13	14	+7.7	12	10	-16.7	13	15	+15.4
194	Anniston, Ala.	18	15	-16.7	—	—	—	—	—	—
174	Ardmore-Ada, Okla.	24	23	-4.2	—	—	—	12	11	-8.3
16	Atlanta	220	215	-2.3	128	151	+18.0	196	213	+8.8
88	Evansville, Ind.*	45	46	+2.2	47	44	-6.4	58	58	+11.5
98	Fargo, N.D.	43	37	-14.0	52	58	+11.5	—	—	—
204	Farmington, N.M.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	Flagstaff, Ariz.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
53	Flint-Saginaw-Bay City, Mich.	47	44	-6.4	52	58	+11.5	—	—	—
157	Florence, S.C.	52	58	+11.5	—	—	—	—	—	—
122	Fort Myers-Naples, Fla.	37	37	NC	—	—	—	—	—	—
149	Fort Smith, Ark.	34	33	-2.9	—	—	—	—	—	—
94	Fort Wayne, Ind.	45	41	-8.9	—	—	—	—	—	—
64	Fresno, Calif.	54	59	+9.3	—	—	—	—	—	—
173	Gainesville, Fla.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
186	Grand Junction, Colo.	14	17	+21.4	—	—	—	—	—	—